SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

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CONTACT: Sen. Liz Brater PHONE: 517-373-2406

SENATE DEMS LEADING FIGHT AGAINST OUT-OF-STATE TRASH

Republicans Choose to Pass the Buck

LANSING--State Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor), minority vice chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs (NREA) Committee, presented a major amendment to the GOP-sponsored trash bill, <u>House Bill 5176</u>, that was taken up today. The amendment failed on a party-line vote.

"The amendments I offered today would have given Michigan the tools to actually restrict the amount of trash that enters this state. As the bill currently stands, it is based on hypothetical scenarios and does nothing to fix our trash problem now," said Sen. Brater.

Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) also sits on the NREA Committee. He took issue with a Republican-supported clause that allows for the continuation of already-existing contracts. He stressed the fact that the legislation passed out of committee today would do little to affect the amount of trash coming into Michigan.

"Today the Republicans took an already toothless piece of legislation and made it much worse." said Basham. "It may feel good to pretend we're solving a problem, but this does nothing to stem the flow of out-of-state trash. To the contrary, it allows the Canadian waste currently coming in to Michigan to continue even if Congress should take action."

Brater's amendment reflects Senate Democrats' ongoing efforts to enact legislation that would give Michigan the authority to manage its waste inflow. This amendment would have raised the surcharge for bringing trash into the state of Michigan. The money raised would then be returned to local municipalities to enhance or develop recycling programs.

"My amendment reduces the amount of out of state trash on the basis of economic common sense: if we charge more to dump trash, less will be dumped," explained Brater. "Waiting around for Washington to approve a plan to ban waste just allows more trash to pour into our state. The issue here is not just Canadian trash. We also take in a great deal of trash from other near-by states, all of which have higher fees than we do."

Sen. Brater also offered a second amendment which was rejected on procedural grounds. This second amendment would have extended the moratorium on landfills to include expansion of existing landfills. It was intended to reduce over-capacity problems in Michigan landfills. All counties in Michigan are currently required to preserve landfill space to accommodate 10-years worth of their own trash. This creates an over-supply of landfill space and eliminates potential customers for counties with existing over-capacity. Extending the moratorium would allow counties that wish to ship their waste to do so and would allow municipalities that depend on trash as an industry to continue to run their operations.

"This extra landfill space is one of the main reasons we're a magnet for out-of-state trash. If we eliminate the extra space, we eliminate the extra trash," said Brater.

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